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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 003105

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: FM ZEBARI ON SAUDIS, PM MALIKI, ARAB LEAGUE AND  
UNGA

REF: BAGHDAD 3070

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Daniel Speckhard for Reasons 1.4 (b) a  
nd (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: During an August 23 meeting with the Charge,  
Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari said the conflict in Iraq has  
reached its zenith but the GOI must persevere to succeed.  
Zebari noted he has good relations with the Saudi foreign  
minister despite some differences over the International  
Compact and the issue of Iraq's Shia. Zebari gave a  
relatively positive assessment of PM Maliki's performance but  
suggested that Maliki needs to rise above party affiliations  
and be the leader of all Iraqis. The Arab League has been  
helpful on Iraqi national reconciliation. End summary.

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The Baghdad Perspective  
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¶2. (C) FM Zebari told Charge August 23 that while "from the  
perspective of Washington or London" where the situation in  
Iraq may appear to be all "death and killing," from the  
perspective of Baghdad the picture is different. Zebari said  
that Iraq's opponents want the GOI to fail. The conflict has  
reached its zenith both internally and regionally. Now is  
not the time to "go wobbly." Zebari argued that violence and  
terrorism in Iraq will be uncontrollable if Iraq fails. He  
went August 22 to see the Saddam Hussein "Anfal" trial,  
stressing that he had never felt so happy in his life.  
Zebari said that he personally came under attack from  
Saddam's forces during the Anfal campaign, so seeing this  
trial was personally satisfying for him.

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Iraq-Saudi Relations  
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¶3. (C) Despite believing the Saudis undermined the September  
10 Prep Group meeting for the International Compact, Zebari  
explained that he has good relations with Saudi FM Prince  
Saud al-Faisal. (Reftel reports in greater detail on  
discussion of International Compact issues.) Zebari relayed  
a recent conversation in which he told Prince Saud that the  
Saudis needed to ramp up their visa processing capacity  
(either by sending consular officials to Baghdad or the Saudi  
Embassy in Amman) to handle Iraqis wanting to travel to Mecca  
during the upcoming Hajj season. Zebari joked that if the  
Saudi Arabian Government does not, Iraqis would flood into  
Saudi Arabia. Prince Saud told Zebari that he could not send  
SAG officials to Baghdad in the current security environment.

¶4. (C) Zebari asserted that Saudi Arabia's real problem is  
"with Iraq's Shia." He said he has been working with a Saudi  
religious institute to hold a meeting with Shia leaders in

Mecca. Zebari said these kinds of projects are important to convince the SAG that Iraq's democratic, federal government does not pose a threat. He stressed that the GOI would not reverse course, even though the composition of the government may change, because of the commitment owed to the 12 million Iraqis who had voted for democracy in Iraq.

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Zebari on Maliki  
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15. (C) Zebari gave a relatively upbeat assessment of Prime Minister Maliki's performance. He said Maliki is honest, frank, and speaks his mind. Maliki is an improvement over former PM Jafari. Zebari believes the Prime Minister should rise above his own party affiliations and be the leader of all Iraqis. In addition, Zebari said, the Prime Minister's office needs to be more organized. Maliki needs capable people with good communication skills, including a director general. The Prime Minister recently hired a press spokesperson so progress is being made.

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Arab League  
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16. (C) Charge asked Zebari about his non-attendance at a recent Arab League meeting on Lebanon. Zebari said he had delegated this meeting to the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs because he had already been to two Arab League meetings and was busy with other issues. Zebari believes the Arab League effort regarding Iraqi national reconciliation has been important, noting that two good Arab League meetings have been held on this issue. Zebari also suggested,

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however, that the Prime Minister is not sufficiently involved in the Arab League effort.

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UNGA  
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17. (C) Regarding the United Nations General Assembly, Zebari suggested that the Prime Minister go to New York for at least a few days. The Prime Minister now wants President Talabani to head the delegation, but Zebari said this issue remains unresolved. (Comment: In a subsequent conversation with the Charge, President Talabani said he had pressed the Prime Minister to go to New York to "present Maliki to the world", but the PM had refused, feeling that there was more work to be done in Iraq. End Comment) Zebari said that he is definitely going and that he will participate in UN SYG Annan's September 18 meeting on Iraq at which the GOI will brief on the International Compact.  
SPECKHARD